

# Improvements, Changes and Ways to Prepare for the First Day

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## Hello DC Families and Parents,

**W**ell. ... Are you ready? It's hard to believe, but the **2010-2011 school year begins Aug. 23**—only a few days away!

We hope you had a fun summer vacation. We also hope you were able to squeeze in some learning time with your children.

As **you** prepare for the first day, you should know about some changes and improvements we've made to programs and services as well as ways to prepare.

**Use this letter as a starting point** but please **visit our website, [dcps.dc.gov](http://dcps.dc.gov)**, for more information about the first day of school, important forms and documents, and more. While you're there, **sign up to receive emails** throughout the year that will keep you connected to your schools.

And please, **if you know parents who speak other languages** tell them to visit the website for **translated versions** of back-to-school news.

**Have a great school year!**

## Early Childhood Transition Week and developmental screenings

**I**f you have a **3- or 4-year-old** attending a **DCPS school** in the **2010-2011 school year**, your child will participate in DCPS' new "**Early Childhood Transition Week**," from Aug. 23 to 27. The schedule for the first week of school will be as follows (children will attend 8:45 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.):

First week of school	Who attends
Monday, Aug. 23 Tuesday, Aug. 24	Students with last name A-K
Wednesday, Aug. 25 Thursday, Aug. 26	Students with last name L-Z
Friday, Aug. 27	All children

**Small groups will help** students adjust to classroom routines and build relationships with their teachers. Parents and teachers also will have time to meet and discuss goals and expectations. If you have **any questions**, call the Office of Early Childhood Education at **202-727-0944**.

**Contact your child's school** to find out when **ECE Family Orientation Night** is scheduled the week of Aug. 16.

**Early Stages** and the **DCPS Office of Early Childhood** will provide **developmental screenings** for **preschool and pre-K** children this fall. Most DCPS elementary schools are participating in this screening program, but **you don't have to wait** until school starts. You can visit the Early

Stages website, [www.earlystagesdc.org](http://www.earlystagesdc.org), and complete the **two screenings online**. Call **202-698-8037**.

## New school year, new menu, more choices, better food

**D**CPS has made some big changes and improvements to breakfast, lunch and afterschool meals.

**WHAT'S NEW?** Take a look at our menu. It features more whole-grained foods and meals lower in fat and sugar.

And **all meal menus** will feature **fruit and veggies** from farms in Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and North Carolina.

**Got milk?** We do, and it will be healthier 1 percent and white skim milk.

Students also will find **vegetarian options** every day at every school.

**Nutritional information for menu items** will be available at each school and on the DCPS website this month.

Students in some schools will see **changes in breakfast and afterschool meal service**.

**Special service models** in **elementary, middle and high school** will give students access to healthy breakfasts.

And the snack that used to be served in the **afterschool programs** will be more like a **light supper**.

**More information** on which programs will be offered in your child's school will be available on the **DCPS website**.

If you have questions or want to give feedback, contact the Office of the Chief Operating Officer at **202-442-5112** or [OfficeoftheCOO.Inquiries@dc.gov](mailto:OfficeoftheCOO.Inquiries@dc.gov).

## Attendance required, age 5+

**A**ttendance is now required for all students who turn **age 5 on or before Sept. 30 until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday**, according to a new law.

In July, the **DC Council** passed the law that requires school staff to report all students age 5-18 with 10 or more unexcused absences to the **Child and Family Services Agency** for suspected educational neglect.

Please know that school staff do not have a choice — they are required by law to call.

If you need help getting your children to attend school, please call your school and ask for the attendance counselor, or call Amoretta Morris in the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement at 202-442-5450.

### MENU FAST FACTS

- New menus with **whole-grain foods**
- Daily **vegetarian** options
- **One percent milk**, white skim milk
- Meals **lower in fat, sugar**
- **Light supper** afterschool

## Important Information on Physicals, Immunizations, Health Guides and More

### Guide to School Health available to families

All you need to know about health in DCPS schools can be found in our **Guide to School Health: DCPS school health policies**, descriptions of **health programs**, including **mental health**. Get your copy on the DCPS website.

### Physicals required before school starts

All DCPS students must submit a **Universal Health Certificate** before the start of school! Here are some things you'll need to know:

- An **annual physical** should be recorded on the Universal Health Certificate by a medical provider.
- For the 2010-2011 school year, the student must have had a physical completed between **Aug. 24, 2009-Aug. 23, 2010**.
- In order to participate in **school athletics**, a student must submit a Universal Health Certificate that says the student received a physical within the past 365 days. However, the Universal Health Certificate will expire 365 days from the date of the exam listed on the form. The athlete will not be able to participate until a current form is provided.
- An updated Universal Health Certificate must be submitted when a new physical occurs.

### Immunizations keep kids healthy

Immunizations are required by law **before children start school**. For a reminder of the immunizations required by age, please see the flyer in your enrollment packet.

Make sure you schedule a visit with a doctor soon if your child's immunizations are not up to date. Some immunizations require more than one dose with return visits.

**If you have questions** about DC's immunization requirements, talk to your child's doctor or call the DC Department of Health

### Youth Risk Behavior Survey for grades 6-12

DCPS middle and high schools will take part in the **Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)** during the **2010/2011 school year**, and your child may be selected to participate.

The survey asks about the **health behaviors of students in grades 6-12, including** questions about nutrition, physical activity, injuries, tobacco, alcohol and other drug use.

It also will ask about sexual behaviors that cause HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.

**Please read the enclosed form and fill out only if you do not want your child to take part in the survey.** If you check the "no" box, then sign the form and return it to the school as soon as possible and no later than Oct. 1.

Immunization Division at 202-576-7130. All forms are in your enrollment packet, or can be found on the DCPS website, [dcps.dc.gov](http://dcps.dc.gov).

### Condoms available for high school students

DCPS has partnered with the **Department of Health** to expand its high school Condom Availability Program. At each high school, there is at least one male and one female staff member who are Wrap MC's – or certified condom distributors. These staff members have completed an **intensive training** and are able to provide condoms, health education services, counseling and appropriate referrals to our students. To find out more about the program, contact your high school principal or Andrea DeSantis at [andrea.desantis@dc.gov](mailto:andrea.desantis@dc.gov) or 202-442-5040.

### High school students can get STD screenings

The DC Department of Health, in collaboration with DCPS, offers free school-based screening and treatment for Chlamydia and gonorrhea to all high school students. Parents may opt their children out of the screening and students may opt themselves out as well. **Please see the attached letter to parents and opt-out form.**

## For children with special needs: Transportation and accommodations for the school year

If your child's **Individual Education Plan (IEP)** says she is eligible for **transportation** during the 2010-2011 school year, please make sure that the special education coordinator at your child's school has the most up-to-date pickup and drop-off addresses and school locations.

Some **information may have changed** over the school year.

The **special education coordinator** at your child's school is available this summer to help you get the proper special education services and supports. However, if you need **additional assistance**, contact the **Office of Special Education Critical Response Team** at **202-442-5400**.

Make sure you apply for **Medicaid** insurance for your child or verify that it is current. The **Department of Health Care Finance** can help you with this process. Call **202-727-5355** or **apply online at [www.dc-medicaid.com](http://www.dc-medicaid.com)**.

### Does your disabled child require special services?

District of Columbia Public Schools must under federal law **protect disabled students from discrimination in services, programs and activities**. In addition, DCPS must **locate, evaluate and identify children living in the District** who may require accommodations or services under the law (known as Section

#### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

**Critical Response Team:** 202-442-5400

**Health Care Finance:** 202-727-5355

**Targeted Student Support:** 202-299-2005

504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973). If you know or suspect that your child has a disability which significantly impacts a major life activity and may need accommodations under Section 504, **contact your child's teacher or your school's 504 coordinator**. Call the District's Director of Targeted Student Support at **202-299-2005** with any questions.

# Afterschool Programs: Power Hour + Sports = AWESOME!

If your kid gets three hours of afterschool programming each day, it's like adding four months of learning time!

Some schools have their own program run by providers outside of the school system, but DCPS also runs fun afterschool programs that offer a variety of **academic, wellness and enrichment opportunities** for students of all ages. Programs are tailored to each school, grade level and need, but all programs include an

To find out if your school has an afterschool program run by DCPS, contact your school, call 202-442-5002, or visit the DCPS website, [dcps.dc.gov](http://dcps.dc.gov), click "Beyond the Classroom," and select "Afterschool Programs."

academic power hour that builds on lessons and skills from the classroom.

High school students can take **credit-recovery classes, receive tutoring, participate in sports and clubs**, and take part in **college and career readiness programs**.

Younger students can get help in academics, get involved in activities that build **self esteem**, and burn off some of that energy **running, jumping and playing** through structured **wellness programs and sports**. (Think: early bedtime!)

## Are you homeless or living in unstable housing? Do you know a family that is? Know your rights

The **DCPS Homeless Children and Youth Program** works with homeless students and families, shelters and community organizations to ensure that students' basic educational rights are protected.

A homeless student is **any child without a regular, fixed and adequate nighttime residence**. The child may live in a **shelter, temporary home, motel, car, campground or on the street**. They also **may live temporarily with relatives or friends** because of the loss of permanent housing.

Homeless students have the right to the following\*:

- Immediate enrollment in school;
- Confidentiality regarding disclosure of homeless status;
- Right to remain at school of origin or placement in a school that is in the student's best interest;
- Transportation assistance (such as bus tokens and passes); and
- A challenging, rigorous education equal to that of their peers.

In addition to **transportation assistance**, DCPS provides **school supplies, school fee assistance, referrals to other city agencies and trainings for parents**.

If you need assistance, please call your school and ask for the school's homeless liaison or call Amoretta Morris in the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement at 202-442-5450.

\* Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001.

## School Notes

### ENROLL your child NOW for the 2010-2011 school year

The clock is ticking until the first day of school. If you haven't filled out **enrollment forms and proven residency** this year, please do so as soon as possible before Aug. 23.

Proving your DC residency is an **annual requirement** and important part of the annual enrollment process.

Local **school funding depends on every student being enrolled**, attending and having proof of DC residency. You must verify residency now so that your school will qualify for full funding.

Don't know how to prove residency? Visit [dcps.dc.gov](http://dcps.dc.gov) or call 202-478-5738.

### Connect with the Chancellor's Office!

We regularly send out information on schools, teachers, principals and students along with notices of community meetings, a parent newsletter and other news that many parents find helpful—and we'd be happy to send it to you too.

Send an email to [dcps.communications@dc.gov](mailto:dcps.communications@dc.gov) and put SUBSCRIBE in the subject line, and you'll hear back from us.

### Make your school beautiful

#### Roll up your sleeves and get involved !

**Beautification Day** will be held this year from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Saturday, Aug. 21**.

This annual event began in 2005 as a citywide "spruce up" of **all DCPS buildings** in preparation for the first day of school. Beautification efforts will include **landscaping, trash pick-up, light painting, flower planting and other beautification efforts on school grounds**.

**Volunteers and supplies** are needed at more than **100 schools**. Please visit [dcps.dc.gov](http://dcps.dc.gov) or call 202-724-1506 to volunteer or donate supplies.

## Prepare for and take the PSAT this fall—for free!

All students in grades 9-11 at each DCPS high school will take the **PSAT on Wednesday, Oct. 13**.

**DCPS covers all costs** for students to take the PSAT and purchased **testGear, online PSAT and SAT preparation**, that students can access through their **Individual Graduation Portfolios**.

The PSAT is an important and essential step for students on the path to college.

The PSAT qualifies students for **scholarships** such as the National Merit Scholarship and the National Achievement Scholarship.

It is also good practice for **college admissions tests** and helps the College Board to connect students with colleges and universities.

Students who take the PSAT can track their progress in preparing for college throughout high school.

Before the test, families should encourage students to complete online preparation and participate in PSAT and SAT preparation activities at their high schools.

On test day, families should make sure that students eat a nutritious breakfast and are on time for this important school day.



## Central office changes put more instructional superintendents in schools

Dear Parents,

In an effort to improve the quality of education in District of Columbia Public Schools, we are streamlining operations in the central office to better support principals.

The changes, announced in May, will affect the number of instructional superintendents who provide management and support to school leadership as well as the number of clusters for which they are responsible.

Instructional superintendents are assigned to groups of schools called clusters and charged with helping principals and other school leaders do their jobs more effectively. They model effective instructional leadership and provide support as needed.

Under the former structure, instructional superintendents found it difficult to provide in-depth management and support directly to school leadership because of the large number of schools and office staff for which they had oversight. At the elementary level, for example, instructional superintendents were responsible for as many as 29 schools and five staff members.

Under the reorganization, the District is moving from six to 12 instructional superintendents, each with between eight and 12 schools to manage. Instructional superintendents will have one staff assistant to manage and will receive support from central office staff.

The new structure will allow instructional superintendents to spend more time in schools, better identify individual school needs and provide targeted support to meet those needs. Also, we believe the move to smaller groups of schools will facilitate professional learning communities among administrators, teachers and other school-based staff who will convene throughout the school year to share best practice and learn from each other.

We are excited to announce the new cluster structure and to introduce you to the talented group of instructional superintendents who will be working with principals and leadership staff to ensure high-quality instruction in every classroom.

Instructional superintendents will reach out to principals over the summer to begin working on improving management and classroom instruction for a smooth transition to the 2010-2011 school year. If you have any additional questions, please contact Brian Pick at [brian.pick@dc.gov](mailto:brian.pick@dc.gov).

Thank you,

Michelle Rhee,

Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools